

Texas Representative Roberto R. Alonzo's

Capitol Report



On Wed, April 16, (photo above, left to right) Rep. Alonzo, along with Concepción Camargo, and Dr. Christian Zolniski participated in the **CMAS Distinguished Speaker Series** sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies at UT-Arlington, where Dr. Antonio Flores addressed the audience on **"Latinos in Higher Education."** Dr. Zolniski is CMAS Director. Dr. Flores is President/CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU) and Camargo is this year's winner of the **Manual Gamio CMAS Award**.

Self-Help Can Be 1st Step in Mental Health Care*

When seeking care for a mental health concern, doctors at Baylor College of Medicine say there are important steps you can take even before your consultation. According to Dr. Sanjay Mathew, associate professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor, self-care is an important first step for caring for your mental health.

Basic Principles. Dr. Mathew identifies the following basic principles of self-care that should be addressed: (1) Nutrition; (2) Exercise; (3) Sleep; (4) Reducing caffeine, alcohol and nicotine intake.

Keeping a Balance: Additionally, Dr. Mathew says: "When we look at patients, we look at lifestyle factors contributing to why they're here and not assume that this is something that has to be treated with an antidepressant, because if a patient is drinking too much, only sleeping a few hours a day or under a lot of stress, everything's going to look like depression." Furthermore, he says: "Addressing these factors can make a significant impact before we even talk to about an antidepressant or mood stabilizer."

If medication is required, self-care still plays a significant role in the treatment of a mental health concern, according to Dr. Alan Swann, an internationally known researcher in the field of bipolar disorder who was recently recruited to Baylor. "Regular physical activity, as long as it doesn't become an obsession, is extremely good for depression and bipolar disorder. It's not a substitute for medicine, but it's been shown to help medicine work better," Swann said.

Both Matthew and Swann, who are also with the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center, suggest always seeking help from an expert for mental health concerns. [* Information condensed from: [Seniorific News](#), 04/07/14 edition]

April is Minority Cancer Awareness Month; Take Care of Your Health, Your Body

With the intention of shining a light on the impact of cancer on minorities in Texas, Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon of San Antonio passed House Bill 114 in 2011 designating **April as Texas Minority Cancer Awareness Month in Texas**. Rep. McClendon is a cancer survivor. The simple fact is that minorities are more likely to die of cancer than whites, and we know that part of that toll is preventable through messaging about diet, smoking, exercise, and early detection. Texas Minority Cancer Awareness Month is a time to reach out to a large population who are diagnosed at a later cancer stage and die sooner.

At a time when some minorities are almost twice as likely as whites to be diagnosed with late stage cancer, we must investigate the reasons why and place special emphasis on the cancers we know can be prevented and detected early.

African Americans with cancer have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any other race or ethnicity. In fact, when compared to white men and women, the death rate is an astounding 32% higher for African American men and 16% higher for African American women.

Hispanics are less likely to see a doctor and more likely to have cancer detected at a later stage when it is more difficult to treat. Hispanics have higher rates of less common cancers like stomach, cervix, and liver.

There are proven **ways to prevent and detect cancer**, and here are some that have the potential to make a real difference in the lives of Texas minorities.

1. Don't smoke.

Lung cancer kills more African Americans than any other cancer. It is the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic men and is second to breast cancer for Hispanic women. If you need help to quit smoking, 1-877-YES-QUIT is a toll-free service.

2. Eat healthier.

Add more fruits and vegetables to your diet, choose whole grains over processed grains, eat less red meat, and drink fewer sugary drinks. Stomach cancer is an amazing 70% higher in Hispanics than whites. A diet high in vegetables and fruits helps protect against this type of cancer and prevents obesity, which is also a cause of cancer. Obesity increases the risk for many types of cancer, and 44% of African American adults and 43% of Hispanic adults are considered to be obese.

3. Exercise more.

Lack of exercise is also related to obesity and increased cancer risk. Even a simple walk two or three times a week could make a difference.

4. Get screened.

Several cancers can be detected early. Women 40 and older should have a mammogram every year. Cervical cancer, which is preventable through Pap screenings, is 70% higher in Hispanic women than in whites. Colon cancer can be prevented and screening is recommended for everyone 50 and older. For people with a family history of breast or colon cancer, your physician may recommend earlier screening. Cancers are often successfully treated if caught at an early stage.

5. See your physician.

If you find a lump or something does not seem right with your body, talk to your physician. An annual checkup is recommended as there may not be symptoms of early cancer.

6. Know where to go for help.

If you do not have health insurance, there may be a community clinic that can help you. Find out their locations through the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.